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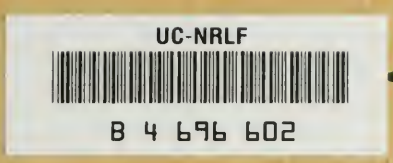


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# MODERN DECORATIVE TITLE PAGES

BY

GEO. A. STEPHEN, F.L.A.

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Silver Medallist, Royal Society of Arts;
Member of the Book Production Committee
of the Library Association;
Author of "Commercial Bookbinding," etc.

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LONDON:

A. W. PENROSE & CO., LTD.

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Fig. 11.

Design by CHARLES FOLKARD.

*Blocks kindly loaned by J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.*

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Fig. 6

Design by WILLIAM BLAKE

*Block supplied by courtesy of B. T. Batsford*

# MODERN DECORATIVE TITLE PAGES

BY GEO. A. STEPHEN, F.L.A.

(*City Librarian, Norwich, author of "Commercial Bookbinding," etc.*)

"NOTHING can be plainer, as a rule, than a modern English title-page," wrote the late Andrew Lang in his collection of essays entitled *Books and Bookmen*, which he published about twenty-seven years ago; but *nous avons changé tout cela*, and decorative title-pages are an important feature of certain classes of books published at the present time. Decorative title-pages date back almost to the infancy of printing, the earliest known specimen being the *Kalendario* printed by Bernard Pictor, Peter Loeslein and Erhard Ratdolt, at Venice, in 1476, which is ornamented with a woodcut border. During the succeeding centuries decorative title-pages passed through many vicissitudes, the ornament, sometimes restricted and sometimes exceedingly elaborated, being effected by means of wood-engraving, copper or steel engraving, etching, a combination of etching and engraving, or the modern processes of line-engraving, half-tone, three and four-colour, etc.

The design and execution of some of the earlier title-pages made them veritable works of art, and thus vandals were led to extract and collect title-pages for the sake of the engravings. Although works of art in themselves, there was generally no artistic relation of type and ornament throughout the whole book. The harmony between text and illustration is traceable to the influence of the work of William Blake, the poet, seer and artist of the latter part of the eighteenth century, who had

a contempt for purely mechanical processes, and therefore wrote with his own hand the text of his poems, and decorated the pages. In John Sampson's introduction to the Oxford edition of Blake's poetical works, published last year, it is stated that by far the greater number of Blake's works were produced by a process of his own discovery which he termed " Illuminated Printing." " In this process," says the writer, " the text and surrounding pictorial embellishments were executed in reverse in some species of varnish upon copper plates, which were afterwards etched in a bath of acid until the whole design stood in relief as on a stereotype. From these plates impressions were printed in various schemes of monochrome, and afterwards delicately tinted by the artist in washes of water-colour, each copy thus possessing an individuality of its own." The seed sown by Blake was nurtured by William Morris—man of letters, craftsman and socialist—and brought to fruition by a brilliant band of decorators, ornamentists and high-class printers, who have realized that " Books are the windows through which the soul looks out," and who have endeavoured to provide a worthy setting for an author's best work. The publisher's present general practice of commissioning one artist to decorate the interior and exterior of a book has had a most salutory effect in securing harmony in the decorative scheme, and it is now reiterating a truism to say that book-decoration has reached a high state of perfection.

The diversity of the designs of modern decorative title-pages is due to the numerous book-illustrators engaged in their production, to the extensive field afforded them by reason of the variety in the purport, style and size of books, and to the different mechanical processes used in printing them. One naturally expects an artist, when designing a title-page, to recognise the rectangular character of the page, to consider the size of the lettering in relation to the size of the page, and the character of the lettering in relation to the type used for the book. One cannot, however, expect a rigid adherence to the canons of one man, because of the diverse work of the innumerable artists engaged in book-illustration; nevertheless, the opinion of Walter Crane, as expressed in his book entitled

*Of the Decoration of Books, Old and New*, is worth quoting. His view is that a decorative end-paper should be delicately suggestive of the character and contents of the book; it may be considered as a kind of quadrangle, forecourt, or even a garden or grass plot before the door. Having passed the end-paper and read the half-title "we are supposed to pass on

Fig. 1
Design by ARTHUR RACKHAM
*Courtesy of Constable & Co., Ltd.*

with somewhat bated breath until we come to the double doors, and the front and full title are disclosed in all their splendour. Even here, though, the whole secret of the book should not be let out, but rather played with or suggested in a symbolic way, especially in any ornament on the title-page, in which the lettering should be the chief ornamental feature. A frontis-

piece may be more pictorial in treatment if desired, and it is reasonable to occupy the whole of the type page both for the lettering of title and the picture in the front; then, if richness of effect is desired, the margin may be covered also almost to the edge of the paper by enclosing borders varying according to the varying width of the paper margin, and in the same

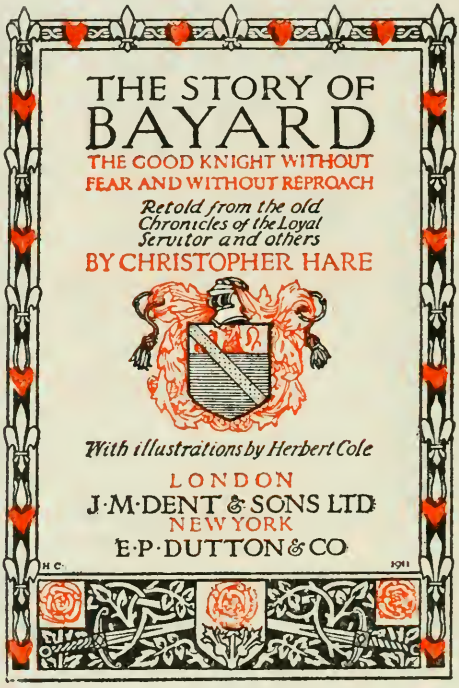



Fig. 2
Design by Christopher Hare
*Courtesy of J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.*

proportions, *recto* and *verso* as the case may be, the broad side turning outwards to the edge of the book each way."

The designs of ornamental title-pages may be broadly classified into six groups. Mr. G. Woolliscroft Rhead in his excellent book on *Modern Practical Design* (published in 1912) has succinctly summarized four groups or systems: "1. The

lettering may be enclosed within a border more or less elaborate either on the symmetrical or unsymmetrical system. 2. It may be placed on a scroll, tablet, cartouche or other ornamental device, the field being filled with either an all-over pattern, or a more or less naturalistic arrangement of plant form or figures, the scroll, tablet, etc., serving the purpose of separating

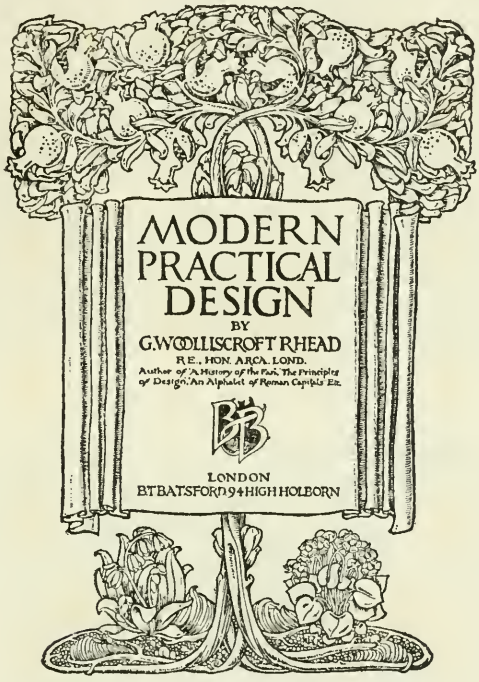



Fig. 3
Designed by G. Woolliscroft Rhead
*Courtesy of B. T. Batsford*

the lettering from the ornamental portion. 3. The lettering may be incorporated with the design without any such separating devices, as in the extremely naïve title-page for Blake's Songs of Innocence" (Fig. 6). 4. The title-page may be a combination of lettering, border and enclosing picture or other device. In all cases, the decorative motif of the design should

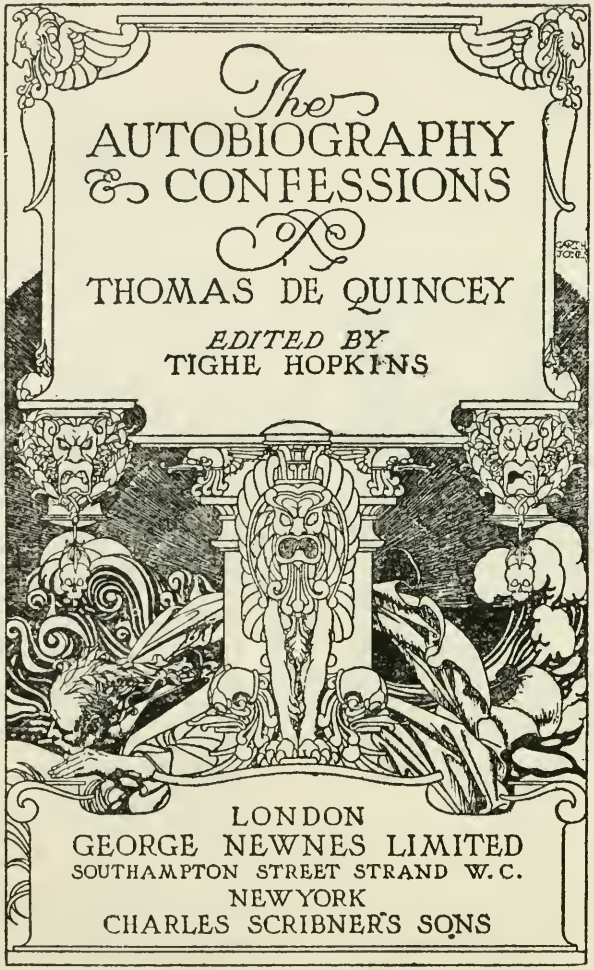



Fig. 4
Design by Garth Jones
*Courtesy of Simpkin Marshall, Ltd.*

Fig. 5
Design by Sidney H. Meteyard
*Courtesy of Hodder & Stoughton*

be appropriate, and whenever possible should suggest the character of the book." In addition to these groups the present writer ventures to add two others, *viz.*, the title-pages which have a publisher's ornamental device, and those that are purely pictorial in character.

The pleasing specimen of a title-page placed within a border—Mr. Rhead's first-named style—is the title-page (Fig. 1) of the edition of Grimm's *Fairy Tales*, illustrated by Arthur Rackham, and published by Messrs. Constable & Co. in 1909, by whose courtesy it is reproduced. Probably the work of no book-illustrator at the present day has met with so much genuine appreciation by juveniles and "children of a larger growth" as that of Arthur Rackham. The border of the title-page selected for illustration, which is composed of elves, birds and animals intertwined, and terminating in a scroll for the publisher's name, exhibits his rich vein of humour and phantasy, and gives a foretaste of the delightful tales and the finely-executed illustrations in the book. The calligraphic lettering is printed in red and black, and harmonises well with the border, the three lines in red imparting a dignified and rich effect.

By kind permission of Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons an illustration is given of the title-page of *The Story of Bayard* (Fig. 2), retold by Christopher Hare, printed in red and black, which has a simple but effective border. The flaming heart alternating with the fleur-de-lys, and the crossed swords are all symbolic of the French knight of the Middle Ages whose chivalrous life is told in the volume.

The title-page of Mr. Rhead's book, from which his classification of title-pages has been quoted, serves as an admirable specimen of his second class. By kind consent of the publisher, Mr. B. T. Batsford, a reproduction is given (Fig. 3). It will be noticed that the designer has placed the lettering, including the publisher's monogram, in a scroll to separate it from the ornamental portion—a pomegranate tree having its roots in the ground, throwing out branches and bearing fruit, being symbolic of the book and its various parts.

A second example of a title-page in this class is that designed by Garth Jones for the edition of Thomas De Quincey's

*Confessions of an Opium Eater*, at one time published by Messrs. George Newnes, Ltd., and now published by Messrs. Simpkin Marshall, Ltd., by whose kind permission it is reproduced (Fig. 4). This design is typical of the imaginative work of Garth Jones, one of the group of artists who collectively form the Carlton Studio, who stands in the front rank of modern decorative illustrators. The title is prominent in the tablet forming part of the appropriate architectural design; the lean prostrate figure with drawn features, as a result of intense suffering, and the skulls are very suggestive of the opium habit to which De Quincey was addicted.

The title-page of the edition de luxe of Longfellow's *Golden Legend*, illustrated by Sidney H. Meteyard, and published by Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton, by whose courtesy it is reproduced (Fig. 5), is another example of this class, the design being frankly suggestive of the striking dramatic poem which embodies Longfellow's conception of Christianity in the Middle Ages. Prince Henry's allusion to the immortal roses brought to St. Cecilia's bridal chamber, and the subsequent dialogue between him and Elsie provide the *motif* of the design. These two, the principal characters, are prominently portrayed in the design, and at the base is the Latin couplet chanted by the pilgrims. The triple enclosures clearly display the title of the book and the names of the author, illustrator and publisher; and the whole design, being printed in gold, is very rich and effective.

Examples illustrating the third class, of which the title-page of William Blake's *Songs of Innocence* (Fig. 6), already referred to, are not very common. In this example, reproduced by the kindness of Mr. B. T. Batsford, who provided the block, the author-designer has portrayed two children at their mother's knee—symbolic of innocence—while the lettering is intermingled with the branches of the tree of knowledge.

Were it not for the border one might perhaps include in this class the accomplished and elaborate title-page (Fig. 7), of Messrs. George Allen & Sons' sumptuous edition of Edmund Spenser's epoch-making poem *The Faerie Queene*, in six volumes, decorated by Walter Crane, the precursor of a prolific school of decorative illustrators. However, as there is

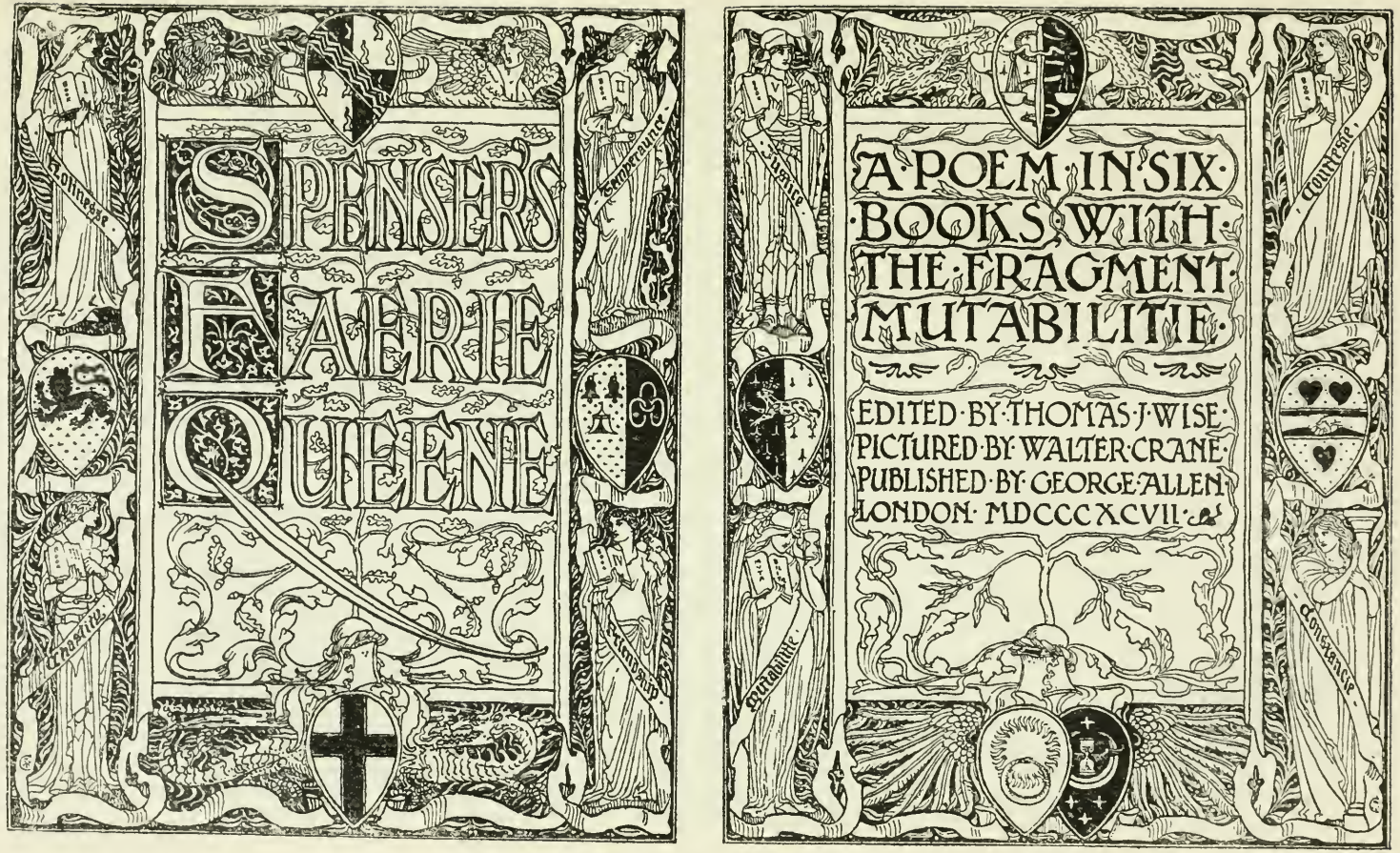



**Fig. 7**
Design by WALTER CRANE
*Courtesy of George Allen & Sons*

a bold border it must be classified in group four. The work of illustrating this great allegory was a most congenial one for Walter Crane, his abilities being admirably suited to its pictorial representation; in his autobiographical work, *An Artist's Reminiscences*, he states that *The Faerie Queene* had long been known to him and that he had cherished a dream to illustrate it. Throughout the work there are numerous full-page designs, decorative initials, chapter headings and page terminations or tail pieces, in which the artist has endeavoured " to embody the extraordinarily rich invention and complexity of much of his [Spenser's] allegory, with its historic, mythical, and classical illusions, as well as to depict the incidents and characters of the story." In the title-page the designer has treated the two pages as a decorative whole, the title of the book, intermingled with the foliage of an oak tree, forming a panel on the verso page, the sub-title and other lettering, intermingled with the foliage of a laurel tree, forming a panel on the recto page. In the fanciful borders the subjects of the six books of the poem are typified, and the virtues are heraldically treated. The work of this undertaking extended over three years, and on the completion of the designs on January 3rd, 1897, the designer expressed his feelings in the following stanza :—

" Great Spenser's noble rhyme have I essayed
To picture, striving still, as faithful squyre,
Each faerie knight to serve, in armes arrayde
'Gainst salvage force, and deathful dragons dire,
Or Blatant Beast with poisonous tongues of fire;
To limn the Lion mylde with Una fayre,
The false Duessa, and the Warlike Mayd.
' Be Bolde,' I read, and did this emprise dare,
And now the door is oped, so let the masque forth fare."

The plan of treating the two pages as a decorative whole is one to which William Morris was partial, the title-page and first page of *The Glittering Plain* being a typical example of his exquisite work. " It was natural," he said, " that I, a decorator by profession, should wish to find suitable decoration for my books." By the kindness of William Morris' trustees, the first opening of the book is reproduced (Fig. 8). In this example

Morris placed his title on the verso page facing the first page of the opening chapter, and in treating the two pages as one he placed narrow margins inwards and at the top and broad margins outwards and at the foot. The whole design gives one a good idea of the remarkably rich effect he obtained by the use of bold black and white ornament and decorative woodcuts in open line.

Another good example illustrating this plan, and also a good example of the fourth class, is the title-page of the edition of George Borrow's *Romany Rye*, in Messrs. J. M. Dent and Sons' world-famous "Everyman's Library," by whose courtesy it is reproduced. The design is the work of Reginald L. Knowles, a decorator of many books, whose work generally reveals an undercurrent of symbolism. His title-pages for the volumes of "Everyman's Library" are all symbolic, most of them belonging to the first class. In the title-page illustrated (Fig. 9), he has used the same border for the other volumes of fiction in this series, but he has introduced, presumably, the figure of Knowledge holding the scroll of learning, on either side of whom are his words of counsel:

"Everyman, I will go with thee and be thy guide
In thy most need to go by thy side."

The designer has conceived fiction to be the rich fruits of the human imagination, and accordingly rich swags of fruit are prominent in the border. The different stories all being more or less concerned with human passions, the designer has formed the roots at the base of his design into a heart-shape, in which a fragrant rose is set; on each side of this two nightingales sing their love-delirium, and rising up through the whole design are flame-shapes, suggestive of the emotions burning within the human breast. From the illustration it will be observed that the border is unsymmetrical, and reversed on the verso page.

Besides the four classes of title-page designs enumerated by Mr. Rhead, reference must be made to those title-pages which have a publisher's device or similar ornament, to form a pleasing contrast to the lettering. An excellent example of this class is the title-page of W. S. Gilbert's *Iolanthe and other Plays* (Fig. 10), illustrated by W. Russell Flint, and published by Messrs. George Bell & Sons, who have kindly granted permission for the

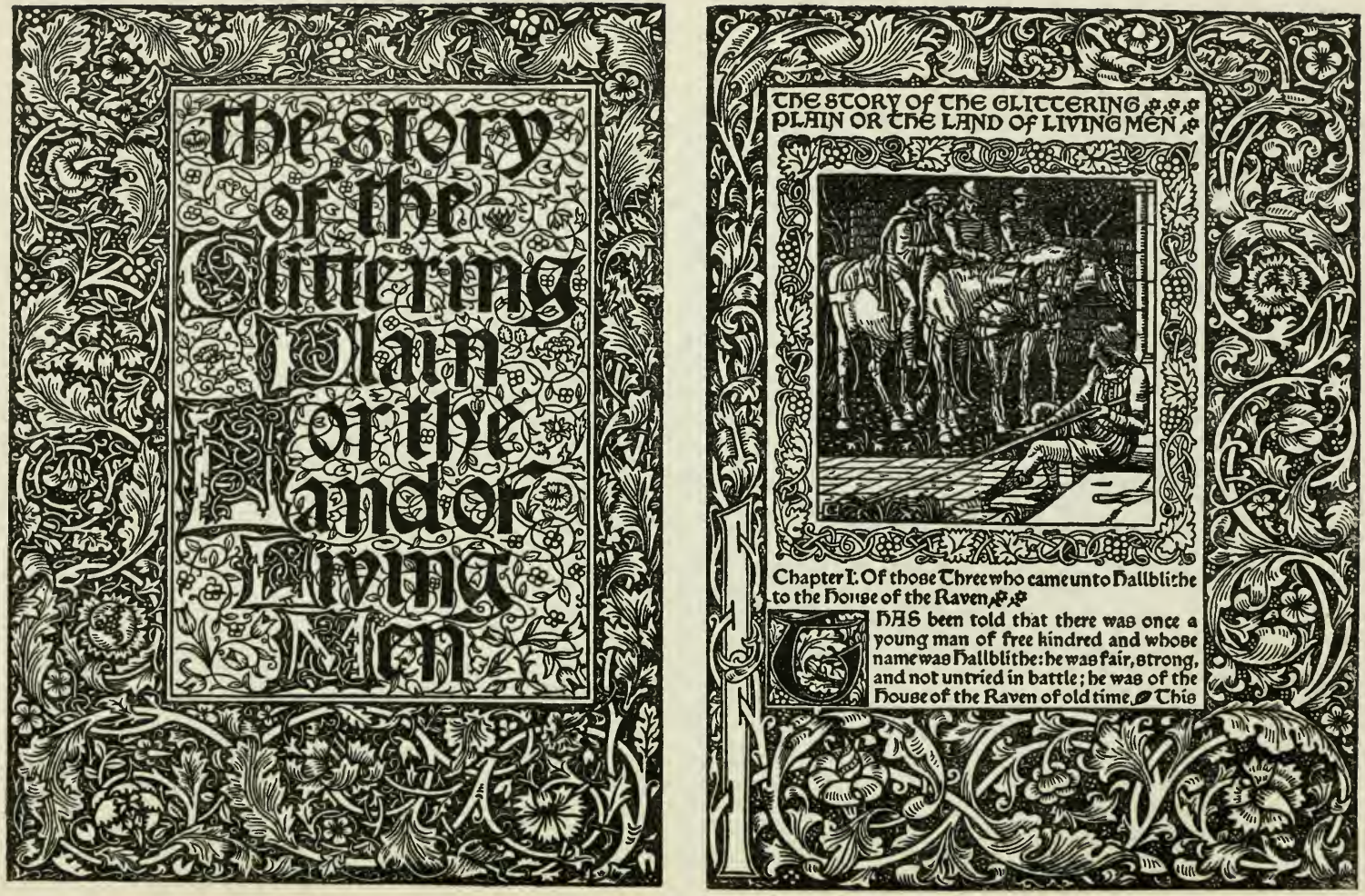
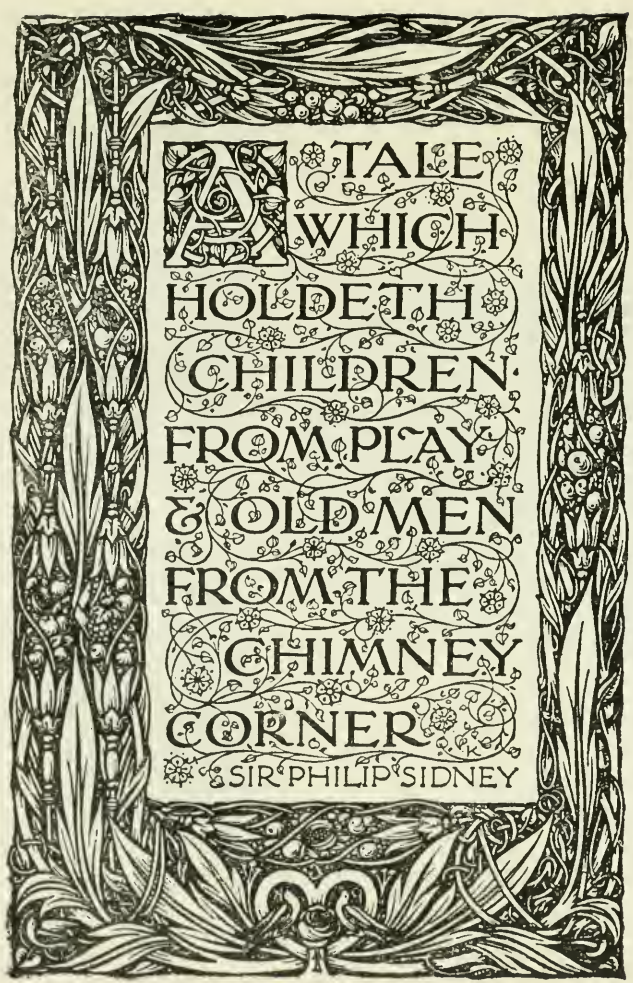

The story of the Glittering Plain or the Land of Living Men
THE STORY OF THE GLITTERING PLAIN OR THE LAND OF LIVING MEN
Chapter I: Of those Three who came unto Hallblithe to the House of the Raven
HAS been told that there was once a young man of free kindred and whose name was Hallblithe: he was fair, strong, and not untried in battle; he was of the House of the Raven of old time. This

Fig. 8
Design by William Morris and Walter Crane
*Courtesy of William Morris' Trustees*



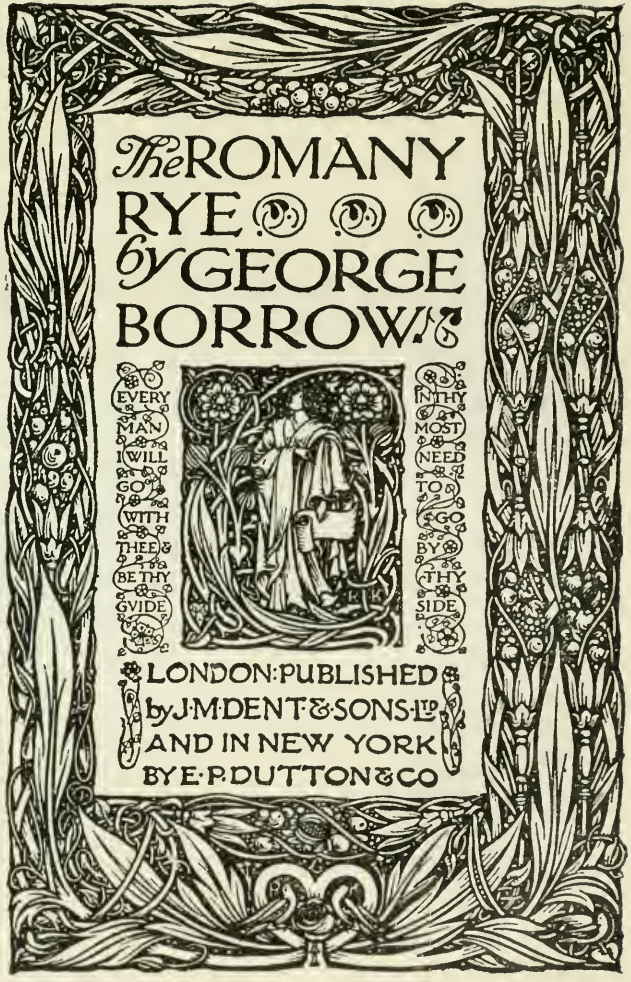


The ROMANY
RYE
by GEORGE
BORROW
EVERY MAN I WILL GO WITH THEE & BE THY GVIDE
IN THY MOST NEED TO GO BY THY SIDE
LONDON: PUBLISHED by J. M. DENT & SONS Ltd
AND IN NEW YORK
BY E. P. DUTTON & CO

Fig. 9
Design by Reginald L. Knowles
*Courtesy of J. M. Dent & Sons*

reproduction of the design. In this example the ornamentation consists of a combination of four figures suggestive of the titles of the plays, indicated on the scrolls, supported by the publisher's devices—a dolphin, an anchor and a bell, the latter being also emblematic of the publisher's name.

Finally there are the title-pages which may be described

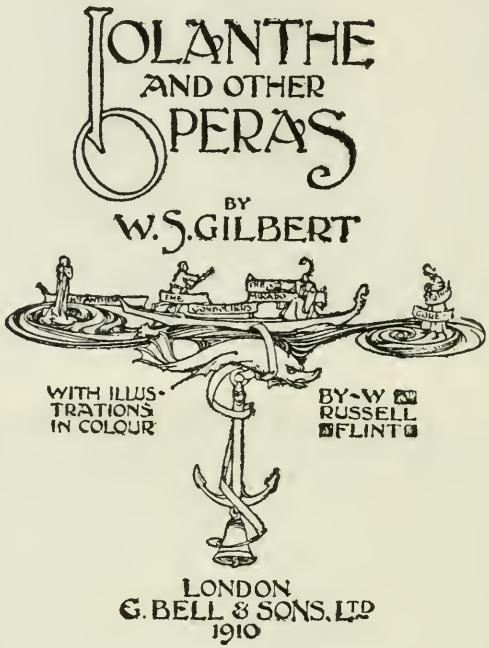



Fig. 10
Design by W. Russell Flint
*Courtesy of G. Bell & Sons*

as pictorial; these frequently depict an important scene, or one or more of the prominent characters in the book. A typical title-page of this class is that of C. Collodi's *Pinocchio* (published by Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons), illustrated at Fig. 11, which is the work of Charles Folkard, an excellent artist whose charming illustrations have enhanced many books. In this example the

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artist, who throughout the book has caught the spirit of this quaint and delightful Italian fairy story, has chosen one of the incidents in the story of the puppet Pinocchio, and has portrayed him in charge of Harlequin and Punchinello on the stage of the puppet theatre. This title-page, printed by the three-colour process—an

Fig. 12
Design by Walter Crane
*Courtesy of G. Bell & Sons*

additional attraction for children—will make a strong appeal to the juvenile mind, and prepare them for the imagination, excellent humour and pathos of the book.

It may not be inappropriate to label as a pictorial title-page the charming and appropriate title-page of Walter Crane's

*Ideals in Art*, published by Messrs. George Bell & Sons, who have kindly permitted its reproduction (Fig. 12). The artist, to illustrate his " Ideal," has portrayed a fair lady holding the lamp of truth and of inspiration, and at her feet are the artist's palette and instruments, and laurels; she is ascending to a visioned temple of beauty. When one contemplates the Greek lamp, the laurel—the tree sacred to Apollo—the Greek temple, and the design generally, one cannot but think that the artist had thoughts of Athene, the Greek Goddess of Knowledge and of the Arts, who personified the clear air as well as mental clearness and acuteness. Not only is the varied work of Walter Crane always interesting, but his fascinating books on art and design, and his volume of *Reminiscences* will repay attentive study, and will convince the reader that this original artist has indeed " Ideals in Art."

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